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"Expand our strengths and overcome the limits we still run up against"

Gabi Fechtner, the newly re-elected chairwoman of the MLPD, spoke with the *Rote Fahne* editorial staff.



Those in power currently give the impression that they are a little confused. What is going on?

The ruling monopolies had quite confidently counted on a CDU/CSU/FDP coalition under a chancellor Armin Laschet. They had a clear program of demands for this: retirement age 70, cuts in labor laws, tax cuts for the monopolies, shifting of the economic and ecological burdens of the crises to the masses, dismantling of still existing protective rights for human beings and nature. However, the government desired by the monopolies failed with the masses. With 24.1 percent, the CDU/CSU attained its worst results in a federal election. It lost more than 4.1 million votes. Now the CDU has been teetering on the brink of an open party crisis for weeks. But even the supposed election winner, the SPD, only achieved its fourth worst result with 25.7 percent. In any case, there will be a chancellor whom more than 70 percent of the eligible voters did not elect. "The forming of governments ... is becoming more and more complicated," as predicted appropriately in Stefan Engel's book, *The Crisis of Bourgeois Ideology and of Anticommunism*.

In the meantime, more and more monopoly representatives are now shifting over to an SPD/Green/FDP government. Forcing Laschet through as chancellor would hardly be accepted among the population. But the demands of the monopolies remain, and the SPD, Greens and FDP must first sell their implementation to their voters. To do this, they all have to make considerable concessions and more or less openly break many of their election promises. Their support is already not exactly stable, and they, too, were often not elected out of conviction. In a poll conducted by the Allensbach Institute in early September, 53 percent even explicitly stated that they were only voting for the "least evil." In addition to the tug-of-war over their own positions and offices, the exploratory talks and coalition negotiations are also a showcase for the modification of the system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking. Illusionary phrases such as "new departure", "ecological-digital transformation of society", or "social-ecological transformation" stand for this.

The MLPD has been talking about a rightward development of the government for quite some time. Is this now at an end due to the alleged new beginning?

The future government cannot give up the rightward development in its substance. Because this is an answer to the intensified inter-imperialist contradictions and aims at preventing the progressive change of mood from becoming a revolutionary ferment. Nevertheless, the election was also a deselection of ultra-reactionary hardliners like

Minister of the Interior Horst Seehofer or Armin Laschet with his dismantling of bourgeois-democratic rights and freedoms in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW). The AfD also lost 18 percent of its votes nationwide, witnesses vitriolic fights between its wings and a sharpened crisis within its party leadership. In some cases, the rightward development will have changing nuances. Alliance '90/The Greens, for example, want a tougher course against China and Russia. The FDP wants to increase arms spending. The tightened police laws were and will be supported by the future governing parties.

In the outcome, was it appropriate to enter the election campaign with a philosophical book and an election program entitled "Socialism"? Wouldn't it have been better to only have demands for the "common people"?

In order to take stock, you must first be aware of the criterion for evaluating our tactical offensive. Our aim was to conduct our campaign in the service of consciousness-raising "For genuine socialism" and "Don't give anti-communism a chance!" We succeeded in this! We took advantage of the expanded opportunities – albeit very limited in the meantime – for taking part in elections. These are also the times when people think about politics the most.

Of course, it is in contradiction to the criteria of bourgeois parliamentarism to put the distribution offensive of the 36th issue of our theoretical organ *Revolutionärer Weg, The Crisis of Bourgeois Ideology and of Anticommunism*, in the focus of tens of thousands of conversations. But in view of the societal confusion, this time we consciously decided to devote more space and time to deep and convincing conversations and encounters. Systematically, we address the urgent need to think beyond the capitalist framework, given the crisis-prone nature of the imperialist world system. We helped to cope successfully with the petty-bourgeois anticommunist mode of thinking and demanded that there be a factual, constructive discussion about genuine socialism and communism as a solution to the problems of humanity. We linked these more fundamental questions to a variety of concrete concerns, demands and struggles of the masses. We also exposed and attacked bourgeois parliamentarism.

Especially among the workers and their families, we have seen a growing openness for this. Almost 5,500 people have now bought the book. Since its publication, reading groups have been set up in many places, and 45 book readings with lively debates have been held. But in Germany, anticommunism is the state religion. Raising consciousness against its effects is, of course, a process that takes many decades. This is above all a mass struggle over the mode of thinking. Anticommunism could gain a foothold in the working class and among the broad masses mainly through the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking as a petty-bourgeois anticommunist mode of thinking. From a strategic point of view, we have gained significant ground in this clarification process. That was the right thing to do, even if we are aware that a mass discussion about socialism will not yet win masses of votes. But we don't want to be the election winner, we want to prepare a revolution. We observed openness and attraction for this among a growing minority.

In this respect, we are satisfied with our election campaign. But the public also noticed that we showed unique features. For example, when the most influential political radio station, Deutschlandfunk, stated: *"The [election campaign] slogans are interchangeable ... and do not in the least let us suspect that they come from the year 2021. In other words, a year in which the crises are accumulating. ... The posters of the ... MLPD show that it can be done differently. They state, 'Nothing but crises, one solution: socialism', or 'Nothing but crises, one cause: capitalism'. ... But that is at least a position on which you can take a stand."*¹

While until now anticommunism as a state religion seemed almost unassailable, the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* wrote on September 4, 2021: "*Is anticommunism, which for decades was a cement of West German society, still suitable for political instrumentalization? ... 'But at some point it [anticommunism] will also die.'* (Eppler) *It will now become apparent whether that point has come closer.*"

This can be assumed! Anticommunism reacts with such furious attacks precisely because it is losing support among the population. We conducted an active street campaign with over 300 rallies, 193 street parades, another 415 activities at workplaces and 404 in residential areas, 248 in inner cities and 48 at universities. We put up 145 direct candidates in 48 percent of the election districts. The establishment of Marxist-Leninist representatives cannot be underestimated for the future class struggle. The Internationalist List/MLPD has so increasingly become an unmissable factor. As never before, other alliance organizations and their representatives contributed to this with leadership and enthusiasm, co-writing the election program, doing alliance work and making cultural contributions.

At the same time, we are still a relatively small and, for many, still unknown party. In all the turmoil of an election campaign, there is always the danger of pushing aside the ideological debate. This time, we successfully took up the fight against this, even if this was not yet always the guideline. We will continue to improve and train this ideological struggle over the mode of thinking on a mass scale.

Do the voting results of the MLPD correspond to its social influence?

Not at all! A total of at least about 41,000 voters gave us their first or second vote. Elections are increasingly being conducted with manipulative methods. Thus, they are less and less a real indicator of the consciousness among the masses. Those in power succeeded in mobilizing the petty-bourgeois parliamentary mode of thinking on a mass scale through the supposedly fate-deciding neck-and-neck race between Laschet and Scholz. Especially in the variant of tactical voting. This could – at least in terms of voting behavior – partially override the openness and sympathy for the MLPD as a socialist alternative. There were many people with progressive aspirations who grudgingly voted for the SPD or the Greens because they wanted to prevent Laschet and the CDU/CSU at all costs. Scholz and the Greens thus virtually sucked up the progressive change of mood. As a result, the parties that the masses classify as being to the left of the SPD lost votes on a larger scale. Above all, the Left Party lost around 50 percent. In the petty-bourgeois parliamentary mode of thinking, the undemocratic 5-percent clause also played a major role, along the lines of "you won't get in anyway." At the same time, the election campaign, with 47 parties, offered a broad spectrum of ideological confusion maneuvers, for example, through the "Querdenker" (lateral thinkers) movement. There were 3,360 direct candidates – 31 percent more compared to 2017 – especially from "Die Partei," the lateral-thinking "Basis" or the Free Voters, which also strongly split the first votes.

The MLPD was the party most fought against in the election campaign, starting with the attempt of the Federal Election Commissioner to prevent our candidacy. Even if the anticommunist campaign of the CDU/CSU, as well as of forces around the AfD, could hardly convince anyone positively, it must be said that it also mobilized the petty-bourgeois anticommunist mode of thinking and made many people uncertain. The anticommunism against the MLPD, which has clearly intensified in recent years, also has an intimidating effect, despite all indignation about the attacks and sympathies for our backbone. This cannot be overridden by single talks on the street. At the same time, the policy of isolating

the MLPD was even increased by the bourgeois media. And so, in nationwide newspapers and on television, we were almost continuously treated as being non-existent.

Have those in power come back into the offensive again with these measures?

You cannot say that. Rather, it is part of the crisis of bourgeois ideology that they need these measures. In Austria we are currently getting insight into the mostly hidden depths of opinion manipulation. Sebastian Kurz would probably not have become Austrian chancellor in the new elections in October 2017 without the massive manipulation of public opinion. He literally bought polls favorable to him, as well as the reports based on them, from an opinion research institute – through advertisements financed by the Ministry of Finance from taxpayers' money. In Germany, too, the FDP, for example, has used micro-targeting to manipulate public opinion. With this business model, operated by Facebook among others, every potential voter gets exactly what he wants to hear, displayed as an advertisement. Anyone interested in the climate received slogans from the FDP promising climate protection. Those who were skeptical about climate protection received advertising with the opposite content.² In both cases, they were supposed to vote for Christian Lindner. This shows not only the manipulative methods of these people, but also their bottomless opportunism. This will backfire, however, if everyone measures them by what they were promised. Even more extensive is the legal corruption of party financing, with alone 190 million euros of the taxpayers' money going annually directly to the bourgeois parties, plus 660 million euros (in 2019) to the party-affiliated foundations. Also manipulative is the so-called graduated equality of opportunity, the way opinion polls are used, and much more.

Is therefore the outcome of votes for the Internationalist List/MLPD of no interest at all?

No, of course we are also interested in the details of the findings that we can draw from the relative results. The outcome of votes for the Internationalist List/MLPD decreased by about 40 percent in second votes and 30 percent in first votes compared to 2017. So much the more, every vote for the MLPD in this jungle of parties was a very conscious vote, and achieved through struggle. Apart from that, you see in the election results that we were able to increase our number of votes in those places where we concentrated our forces, in connection with various objectively favorable factors.

In almost all voting districts in Thuringia we posted increases, on average from 145 to 202 votes per 100,000 voters. The distinctive feature was that we had concentrated our forces there nationwide for a length of time and built up the party systematically, but also that the criticism of the Left Party, which provides the Minister President, as well as of the Greens and the SPD, which form part of the government, is particularly well developed there, and the DKP did not stand for election. There were also other focal points of our systematic building work where we were able to gain more votes. In the best polling stations we reached between two and 6.1 percent. This shows how, through our work, we can convince people to vote for us – but at the same time that we got scarcely any spontaneous votes.

In a video after the election you also spoke of weaknesses of our own making. What are these about?

We did not succeed in gearing the whole election campaign especially to the youth. The thought not to run a special youth election campaign so that everyone would address the

youth was not thought through to the end and was partly misinterpreted. So the result was that there was no well-wrought separate strategy and tactics of youth work in this election campaign. We did address young people, and almost all county and local party branches started systematic activities in front of schools, especially vocational schools, and company training workshops. We also conducted some youth activities like youth concerts, and recruited a number of young supporters and members, but by far not in the planned quantity.

Among the young people there is a developed polarization about the right conclusions from the crisis chaos in which they grow up. So on the one hand, the openness to the MLPD, to *Rebell* and socialism, is particularly great among young people. At the same time a whole system of establishments and institutions systematically acts upon the young people in order to spread the petty-bourgeois individualist and petty-bourgeois anticommunist mode of thinking. The attacks of liquidationism steered by the intelligence services, as at the FFF demonstrations or through the anti-Germans in the antifascist movement, were directed particularly against our influence among the youth. From the petty-bourgeois antiauthoritarian mode of thinking it is explicitly the hostility to organizations and the ideology of freedom from ideology which take effect, as though socialism were outdated and Marxism-Leninism sheer propaganda. Here, too, the close interaction of how, on the basis of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking, anticommunism can take effect as a petty-bourgeois anticommunist mode of thinking becomes apparent. The fact that according to Infratest Dimap the CDU only gained ten percent of the votes among the first-time voters (in 2017 still 25 percent) is a manifestation of the criticism of the rightward development. Most of the votes from young people were for the Greens, often connected with the illusion of voting for the party of environmental protection. With equally 23 percent of the first-time voters, the FDP drew level. Although this party has a pronounced monopoly program, it branded itself, however, with a modern image including demands for rights and liberties, digitization and progress, rights for gays and lesbians, or the legalization of cannabis. It thus massively promotes a petty-bourgeois concept of freedom and the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking among the youth. So here an intensive struggle over the mode of thinking especially geared to the youth must be waged.

Also, at times, the principles of a tactical offensive were not consistently adhered to in our work. For instance when in our party work concerning the *Rebellisches Musikfestival* ("Rebellious Music Festival") we lowered our sights as to the correct concentration of forces and offensive mobilization. In our agitation and propaganda we will also continue to learn. We had a number of convincing media like our election paper, the election program, a series of films, and a significantly extended online campaign. We also had a personality election campaign with many good candidate leaflets. Here too, however, many things came too late, and some arguments were not yet fully convincing.

As to the methods, street walkabouts connected with house calls as well as the guideline to hand over our written materials mainly personally have proved successful and have more and more become a standard. The military theoretician Carl von Clausewitz worked out as an essential feature of every offensive: "The weaker the defender shows himself morally, the bolder the assailant should become."³ The bourgeois politicians showed moral weakness, and plenty of it, which we certainly attacked. But our polemical aggressiveness and trenchancy was not yet always sufficiently developed.

The lead time in all our work must also become better, instead of planning many things at short notice. One pivotal thing is scientific work, which, with a conscious strategy and tactics, consciously and timely disposes the forces, cultivates them and, most of all, always recruits new ones. Thoroughly evaluating and improving all this will be part of our

current task of "securing the victory." Nonetheless, there is undoubtedly no other party that, measured by its forces, ran its election campaign in such a mobilizing, attractive way, based on a large mass of supporters, and completely on a voluntary basis, on the streets, in the neighborhoods, in front of and in the factories – and all this against such a headwind!

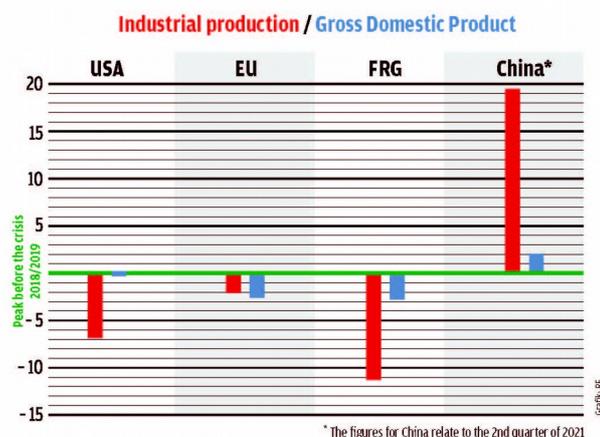
Do you expect politically more stable times to come?

No, quite the opposite. What kind of a new start of the government is it supposed to be if in this general crisis situation it does not even scratch the surface of the most extreme consequences of the capitalist crises? The global environmental crisis is dramatically intensifying toward a global environmental catastrophe. Several irreversible tipping points have obviously been reached, as for instance with the melting of the ice sheet in Western Greenland. In view of the worldwide 82.4 million refugees today, the UN Refugee Agency forecasts more than 200 million "climate refugees"⁴ in the future. The corona pandemic has spread worldwide. At least 237 million people have as yet been infected and 4.9 million deaths have officially been counted. In several countries, including Russia, the numbers are dramatically increasing these days. The Afghanistan campaign of the NATO ended in an open debacle. The general danger of war is growing, especially between the imperialist main rivals, USA and China.

In the global economy the new phenomenon of supply bottlenecks occurs. What is this all about?

We are witnessing an unprecedented raw material and logistics crisis! Its underlying cause is, first of all, that the world economic and financial crisis, which already started in 2018, is not yet over at all. Industrial production and the gross domestic product (GDP) in the most important imperialist countries, apart from China and South Korea, have still not reached the peak level before the crisis 2018/2019. The intensified international competition up to a battle of annihilation precipitated the reorganization of international production into crisis. This also vents in drastic supply bottlenecks – which in turn has an aggravating effect on the world economic and financial crisis. The chaotic ups and downs of the capitalist global economy in interaction with the wavelike development of the corona pandemic impede the scheduled delivery and use of commodities. This can be seen in the containers piling up in some ports, for example.

In the course of the progressing division of labor under the premise of maximum profit and world market leadership, production was globally concentrated in few production facilities with highest utilization. Seventy-three percent of the production capacities for chips, for example, are located in the four Asian countries Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and China. If there are interruptions there, or competition-related preferences regarding to whom the chips will be delivered, it has a huge impact. The global universal crisis scenario undermines the supply chains geared to just-in-time production: Important ports in China had to be blocked for weeks due to the



corona pandemic. Forest fires and flood disasters interrupt important arterial roads. Strikes in this sector also show great effect.

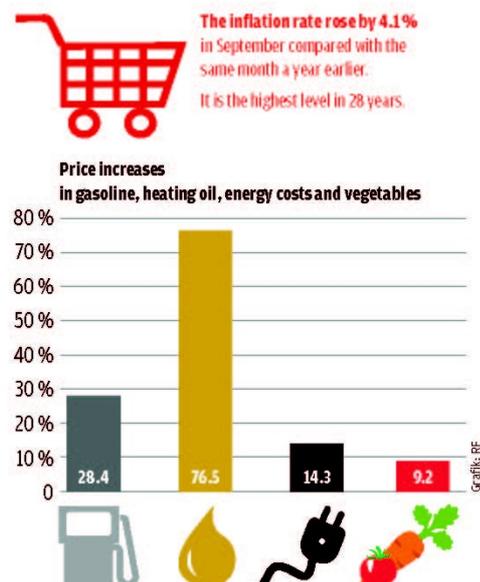
The crisis of trade routes and supply chains is also a result of trade wars with more and more sanctions. As early as 2019, US tariffs on silicon under Trump and trade restrictions by Japan led to a shortage of wafers, preliminary products of chips.⁵ In 2020 the USA blacklisted the largest Chinese chip producer SMIC and 56 other Chinese monopolies, which significantly limits the possibilities for international business. Partly, however, this chip crisis is also taken as an excuse and is shamelessly exploited to pocket short-time working compensation in Germany. The fact that industrial facilities stand idle worldwide is a demonstration of the complete failure of capitalism, considering the enormous potential of a worldwide coordinated production based on digital technologies. Only a socialist planned economy can make use of the advances of the revolutionary productive forces in the interest of humankind.

But with the cheap money policy an unheard-of crisis management was implemented. Does it not show any effect?

Exactly in the consequences of these measures we can see how the crisis management of those in power was itself hit by crisis. Their measures always prepare new and even deeper crises. The fact that these measures have a mainly national character further aggravates the international problems. The cheap money policy did precisely not lead to investments that stimulated the promised upswing of the economy. Instead, the investments went into speculation, which bloated to immensity, and at the same time fueled public debt and inflation substantially. Already, new dislocations in the financial and real estate sector turn up, and gigantic speculation bubbles are about to burst.

The rate of inflation has risen to a 28-year high, amounting to officially 4.1 percent in September compared to the same month of the previous year. The energy prices have altogether increased by 14.3 percent.⁶ In August the prices of agricultural foods were 13.3 percent higher than one year before. Households with low income are hit hardest. Therefore, the struggle for higher wages and salaries, for a wage top-up, but also for a significant increase of the various social benefits gains essentially in importance. Also, the issue of rents and service charges will continue to become more volatile.

Certainly, the system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking has not reached its end in spite of all the crises. Those in power had to spend quite an amount for the measures against the loss of trust during the world economic and financial crisis, the corona crisis, and once again in the final stage of the election campaign. Thirty-eight billion euros alone went from the federal budget into the several times prolonged short-time working compensation since the beginning of 2020. The money there also operates as a massive subsidization of the monopolies.⁷ Thirty billion euros were promised to the victims of the floods. However, the gigantic expansion of



public debt for the crisis management is a pseudo-solution, because, in turn, it limits the fiscal possibilities for crisis-damping measures by those in power. The masses will then have to foot the bill. Forty percent of the companies with more than 500 employees are planning to cut jobs this very year.

One must not overestimate the tactical skirmishes and the concrete ups and downs in day-to-day politics. The pent-up economic, ecological, ideological and social problems cannot be fundamentally solved in the framework of capitalism. The crisis management is a disaster, not only politically and economically, but also ideologically. The so much praised pragmatical "driving by sight" [a metaphor for: moving slowly, reacting to what happens – the translator] is basically a declaration of surrender. It declares mere responding in order to prevent the worst collapses to be the only still available means.

What new aspects are developing in the class consciousness of the working class, and how does the MLPD take influence on this?

It was new that militant activities of the industrial workers broke out in the middle of a national election campaign. These were an expression of a strengthened trade-union consciousness, contrary to the common slogan that you cannot fight in the crisis. They were often explicitly directed against the spirit of negatively oriented class collaboration. The GDL (German Locomotive Drivers' Union) was not impressed by anti-worker and partly anticommunist agitation during its strike. The employees of the Charité and Vivantes hospitals in Berlin went on strike together for the first time on this scale. This strike also had a political content, as it was also directed against the drastic understaffing in the clinics during the pandemic and against the Berlin *Land* government of SPD, Alliance '90/The Greens, and the Left Party.

On 17 September 12,000 colleagues from the Airbus Group in Augsburg, Bremen, Buxtehude, Hamburg, Nordenham, Stade, and Varel took part in a one-day company-wide warning strike. Within the framework of these trade union struggles, independent elements increasingly developed. For decades the MLPD and its factory groups have been doing rank-and-file work in the most important monopoly factories and trade unions. They can be found in the forefront of these struggles and promote the company-wide struggle in the spirit of the working-class offensive – even across national borders. The popular movement also saw an upturn of protests, especially the struggle against high rents and the youth environmental movement, with more than 620,000 people taking part in the Fridays for Future Day of Action on September 24.

Immediately after the national elections, Opel/Stellantis announced that it would not be taking up production again at the Eisenach plant for the first, allegedly because of the "chip crisis." In return, they continue to brazenly draw short-time work compensation until the end of the year. At the same time, they started to vacate the plant. Everything indicates that a plant closure is imminent and that the relocation of production to Sochaux in France has been planned for a long time. Surprisingly, there they apparently have enough chips for production. As a result of years of efforts for cross-border cooperation, trade unionists from the "competing" Sochaux plant also immediately declared their solidarity with the Opel workers in Eisenach. The decisive prerequisite for going on the offensive is to successfully cope with petty-bourgeois reformist illusions in the workforce about the so-called transformation and, in particular, to lastingly cope with the petty-bourgeois anticommunist mode of thinking. It is also time to stop accepting that there is no full legal right to strike in all matters in a country that claims throughout the world to be a model of democracy. The initiatives for this must be intensified instead of following the radical-sounding promotion of social collective bargaining agreements by some reformist

trade union leaders. Social collective bargaining agreements are essentially about preventing struggles. This capitulation is being justified with the idea of at least getting as much as possible out of the liquidation of plants and jobs.

So the MLPD does not follow the orientation of writing off the working class?

The forces oriented to postmodernism promote a petty-bourgeois negativist way of thinking, directed exactly against the necessary class- and self-confidence of the working class. According to them, "the time of the big strikes is over" or "the workers can't change the plans anyway." This leads to capitulation and conciliation with reformist approaches.

This is not our approach! In fact, the time of corrupt monopoly capitalists, who let the world descend into crises, is over. The MLPD will even extend its work among the working class considerably. Our tactical offensive set important signals for this. At at least 69 rallies and 415 additional campaign activities or rallies at large enterprises, there were far above-average rates of people taking our campaign material, intensive conversations, and hundreds of new connections. At the same time, the AfD had a disproportionately large share of votes among workers and their families in the elections.

This shows that we need to do an even better job in consciousness-raising to help workers cope with the influence of *voelkisch* (ethno-nationalist) demagoguery like that of the AfD, as a new reactionary variant of class-collaborationist politics.

In the region of eastern Lower Saxony with the large VW plants, we were able to further strengthen the MLPD, building upon our previous rank-and-file work there. Those in power reacted particularly allergically to our increased establishing of roots in the large-scale enterprises. There were more than 30 police interventions against our election activities, especially in front of the factory gates. An urgent motion of the MLPD against the prohibition of an election activity in front of VW in Hanover led to a blatantly reactionary court decision that was confirmed by higher courts. This decision states openly that the protection of the private property of the means of production is of greater value than the right to freedom of assembly, freedom of opinion, and freedom of the press. The reactionary Workplace Labor Relations Law, with its ban on political activity at the workplace, is to be explicitly extended to the areas in front of the plants. And so accordingly, VW representatives gave instructions to the police at various rallies on how to deal with the MLPD. This is the dictatorship of the monopolies and class justice live.

The MLPD has achieved some important successes in the struggle against anticommunist repression. How is this to be evaluated?

As a climax, it was very significant that the dangerous person classification of Stefan Engel, our longtime chairman and now head of the theoretical organ, is now off the table. That first required some hard struggles to get this case admitted at court. But that is not the end of his being treated as a dangerous person. New scandals are constantly coming to the light. At times, Stefan Engel and Monika Gärtner-Engel were on the wanted list throughout Europe because they allegedly posed a serious threat to "the internal and external security" of Germany. Both of them had their bank accounts terminated. It is outrageous, deliberately untruthful and demagogic how the MLPD, especially its leading representatives and their internationalist work, are being brought in the vicinity of supporting international terrorism.

In their sum, these are the most extensive attacks on our party rights so far in the context of the concrete change of tactics of those in power in dealing with the MLPD. Here, we will

shed some more light on the dark activities of the intelligence services and offensively fight back the attacks. Of course, this is all an integral part of the movement "Don't give anticommunism a chance!" Because anticommunism is also directed against every progressive and democratically-minded person who fundamentally criticizes the relations of rule and earnestly takes up the struggle against them. At the same time, it is of concern to every democrat when communists are again persecuted in Germany because of their world outlook.

In our tactical offensive, we were able to help increase the number of signatures for the movement "Don't give anticommunism a chance!" significantly by over 7,300 to almost 19,000 in mid-October. Justifiably, people are currently very sensitized against the racist and fascist discrimination and oppression of various minorities. But that pogrom-like moods are staged against us at demonstrations because of our party symbols, that our flags and emblems are destroyed, people are beaten up and police operations are launched against our election campaign events – that is not worth a line in the bourgeois reporting. Due to the state religion of anticommunism, Article 4 of the Basic Law, which describes "the freedom to profess a ... philosophical creed" as "inviolable," apparently does not apply to communists. This must be attacked!

Various measures are clearly aimed at restricting our systematic rank-and-file work. For example, the verdict in favor of VW against our work in front of the factory gates, which we have been doing for 50 years, or the new assembly law in North Rhine-Westphalia. It shall allow that in the future any leader of a demonstration can throw us out of struggles and demonstrations. It has proved to be decisive that we rely fully on a completely convincing offensive against anticommunism. In doing so, we won important victories and proved the illegitimacy of the measures. Class consciousness must keep pace with this new quality of attacks on the MLPD and deal successfully with the petty-bourgeois anticommunist mode of thinking. This also includes consciousness about the character of the bourgeois state as the dictatorship of the monopolies.

In the last few weeks we have heard extensive coverage of the party congresses of bourgeois parties, often pushed through within a very short time. How did the 11th Party Congress of the MLPD proceed?

It can be said without exaggeration that the 11th Party Congress of the MLPD was the stark counter-program to the undignified and undemocratic haggling for offices that we are currently witnessing in bourgeois politics, especially around the formation of the government. You just have to imagine that two persons decide between themselves who first becomes candidate for chancellor and now vice-chancellor, as the chairpersons of Alliance '90/The Greens did. Everywhere in the CDU/CSU, knives are being sharpened in order to dump Armin Laschet at the next party congress at the latest.

Our Party Congress had nothing in common with such methods. For us, party congresses are a climax of the development of inner-party democracy in interaction with the unified decision-making on the next tasks and goals. All our members received the draft report of the Central Committee. The basic units of the party had half a year for thorough preparation, deliberation, and drafting of motions. On the basis of great approval, without a single motion for rejection, about 1,500 motions were submitted by the county and local delegates' meetings and local membership assemblies. Candidates could only be nominated on the basis of a favorable assessment by the party group and the approval of the county or local delegates' meeting, as well as a well-founded application and their having proved themselves. This broad development of democracy must, of course, be centralized again, i.e. concentrated and summarized.

The party congress is the highest organ of our party. Its decisions are binding, also and especially for the new party leadership. This is how democracy goes over into centralism and vice versa. Democratic centralism, that is not only an organizational principle, but also an epistemological process, with which the MLPD comes into accordance with its tasks and works "with its finger on the pulse of the times."

What can you report about the results of the 11th Party Congress?

Our 11th Party Congress – which, appropriately enough, is the Erfurt Party Congress – found that the imperialist world system is in the greatest state of instability since World War II. For the first time in decades, the emergence of a revolutionary world crisis has again become a real option. We will experience unprecedented upheavals, accelerations, intensifications, and polarizations. It is necessary to orient ourselves and the masses to this, to advance this development, to prepare ourselves, and to forge the forces and tools. The 11th Party Congress stated that it is one of the most important tasks that in every task the MLPD conducts a profound struggle over world outlook, against its displacement.

This is also in accordance with the founding documents and the history of the MLPD, which was built up in the ideological struggle. However, there has been a tendency to gradually displace this achievement. At the same time, this task gains importance in view of the social confusion and the necessity of a preliminary struggle over world outlook for the international socialist revolution. For example, there will be no society-changing environmental struggle without dismantling the idealist theses of ecological transformation. The positivist methods of prognoses based purely on figures must be exposed and the dialectical-materialist method must be anchored. We will polemicize with complete conviction against the hypocritical claims of imperialist environmentalism about the compatibility of capitalist economy and ecology. The struggle over world outlook is therefore not abstract philosophical talk, but the indispensable clarification in thoughts, feelings and actions of where things must go. This is also a call to the entire party and those around it to increase initiatives in the ideological struggle. At the Party Congress, we discussed the strengthening of our focus on the working class in the struggle against postmodernist influences.

At the same time, we want and need to make progress in alliance work with the petty-bourgeois intermediate strata. It is of strategic importance to win them for the revolutionary alliance with the working class for the struggle for socialism. This includes breaking away from bourgeois, petty-bourgeois as well as proto-fascist and fascist forces such as the lateral-thinkers movement.

In the evaluation of the Party Congress we had to state self-critically that, despite all the commitment, the environmental question was discussed too little at this Party Congress. The environmental struggle is and remains the second most important line of struggle of the MLPD, which must be given high priority in view of the accelerated transformation into a global environmental catastrophe.

The Party Congress noted a successful change of generations in the party leadership. Thirty-eight percent of the members in the Central Committee are younger workers, who have nevertheless been working in enterprises for years. There are significantly more industrial workers in our CC than in the entire German national parliament. In addition, for the first time there is a majority of women in the Central Committee. All this without quotas or anyone getting an unjustified bonus. All candidates were expected to meet the highest standards of self-transformation and to prove themselves in theory and practice in the class struggle.

Anticommunism is mainly aimed at keeping people away from the MLPD. What assessment could you make with regard to the recruitment of new members?

With 12.5 percent growth in membership since the last Party Congress, we have been able to draw a positive balance. In view of the ideological confusion in society and the aggressive anticommunism on the part of those in power against the MLPD, this is a remarkable achievement! At the same time, it would be many more were it not for the fact that we still lose too many new members again. Especially because they often cannot combine the party work with the complicated working and living conditions in this society. Improving this must be a major focus of attention.

We have to think more about the fact that we want to win over a mass of working people, single parents, shift workers, and young people, who are often very challenged in their everyday lives. Not everyone can be expected to meet the demands made of a professional revolutionary. Everyone must be able to grow into suitable tasks in party work and contribute according to their abilities and possibilities. Our training and educational work must also become even more all-round, especially for new members.

The delegates at the Party Congress discussed very critically the need for a "turnaround" in the promotion of non-party trade unions, environmental, youth, refugee or women's organizations. They are an antipole to the so-called non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are usually strictly anticommunist in orientation as a pseudo-opposition and depend on the financial support of the government. The whole crisis-proneness of imperialism needs the answer of really non-party forms of organization which do not let themselves be used by those in power. Therefore, it is a matter of honor for the whole MLPD to promote the organizations that are really open regarding world outlook on an antifascist basis. This has been neglected to some extent in recent years.

What conclusions were drawn for youth work?

The 14th Youth League Congress and the summer camp this year show that the youth league *Rebell* is developing in a complicated social environment with a stable core. At the same time we cannot be satisfied – measured by the strategic importance of winning the youth – and the *Rebell* is still much too small. In youth work, the pandemic has limited us the most. At the same time, the Erfurt Party Congress noted that in recent years the critical and self-critical adoption of our youth policy line, its creative implementation, and the guidance and control for that have been neglected. The Party Congress has committed itself to take serious steps to resolve this contradiction and has taken clear decisions for the entire party. Thus, every member will do youth work in one way or another, and 30 percent of the comrades in each group will focus on it. I myself trained and practiced the importance of systematic rank-and-file work in joint activities at the summer camp with members of *Rebell*. For this, even better basic training must be done by the MLPD, and the *Rebell* members must be trained comprehensively. In addition, we have proposed to *Rebell* to attach greater importance to cultural work. For instance, to make regular youth concerts, which strengthen the rebellious self-confidence and cohesion and build a clear antipole to the decadent bourgeois mass culture. In the work of the Red Foxes, the traditional St. Nicholas celebrations, for which the youth league *Rebell* assumes full responsibility, will invite many new children and thereby strengthen *Rebell* and the Red Fox organization.

We will also strengthen the work among students. Three million students are a large section of the youth that was particularly impacted by the corona pandemic. It is significant that they unite more closely and connect consciously with the working class. At the same time, it remains essential to strengthen the proletarian character of *Rebell*, which must also

unite working-class youth in particular. The MLPD will entrust the *Rebell* with more major tasks. The enthusiastic participation in brigades as in Congo or Kobanê shows: The youth wants to accomplish something big, gain fighting experience and learn in the process. In addition, low-threshold activities and offers that involve the whole family are important for young and old: flea markets, children's festivals, partying together, doing sports, and so on. Last but not least, the next volume, number 37 in the *Revolutionärer Weg* series, will also have a special significance for educational work among the youth.

What can be expected from the next issue of the book series *Revolutionärer Weg*, Nos. 36–39, *The Crisis of Bourgeois Ideology, and the Doctrine of the Mode of Thinking*, which Stefan Engel announced in his last interview?

We are experiencing mass movements worldwide that are already expressions of general societal crises. But they are often not ideologically clear, often still influenced by different variants of bourgeois ideology. Thus, they cannot contribute purposefully to a change in society. If you go as a young person to a demonstration like Fridays for Future or in honor of Lenin, Liebknecht, Luxemburg, you will meet all bourgeois and petty-bourgeois currents, anticommunists of various shades, revisionists, Social Democrats, Trotskyists and anarchists. In order to see through this, too, we must clarify these ideological questions on an ever larger mass scale.

Under the leadership of Stefan Engel and the editorial staff of our theoretical organ, the new Central Committee is working intensively on further issues of the *Revolutionärer Weg* system, with priority given to Volume 37, "The Crisis of Bourgeois Ideology and of Opportunism." This issue deals with the crisis of essential varieties of bourgeois ideology since the reorganization of international capitalist production in the 1990s. These include the crisis of neoliberalism, of fascist conspiracy theories, and of Trotskyism. It also includes revisionist and neorevisionist theories, such as that of social-imperialist China, or the crisis of reformism. We also deal with movements that have a particular influence on youth, such as the capitulation line of the "Interventionist Left" or the illusions of democratic confederalism. Only if we ourselves are completely clear ideologically and politically can we deal properly with the dialectics of supporting the right goals of the mass movements in solidarity and at the same time keeping and expanding a clear course, and thus bringing in perspective and effectiveness.

What does "secure the victory now" mean, for which the MLPD has taken three months' time?

For what I have outlined here, we have to take time. That is why we have decided on a whole criticism and self-criticism campaign. In this sense, the work must also be conducted as conscious self-change, in which the work is thoroughly evaluated and advances in knowledge and practical changes are systematically organized. We also need time to connect closely with new comrades-in-arms, contacts, and interested people, to get to know each other, to systematically clarify questions, to learn the new organized life step by step. This will go hand in hand with dealing more deeply with the results of the 11th Party Congress and the *Revolutionärer Weg*, Number 36.

We are making everyone who has bought this book in recent weeks the offer to take part in reading groups and discuss the book together. Our comrades must take considerably more time for this, because the book is not easy reading and must be thoroughly studied and discussed collectively so that it can also have a practical effect. At the same time, of course, we will closely follow the process of forming a government, and the struggle against shifting the burden of crisis onto the working class and the masses is on the

agenda. Already in the run-up to expected struggles it is important to strengthen the MLPD and especially our factory groups. Great importance will be attached to cultural and leisure work. The fact that this is sometimes underestimated and not really taken seriously as part of our party life is an expression of a certain sectarianism or also an expression of a separation of politics from private life.

We from the CC will be more mindful not to overburden the party so that there is time for study and education, leisure and culture, excursions and, last but not least, personal affairs. Especially when the class struggle increases in sharpness and the complexity of the ideological questions to be clarified grows, solidarity, closeness and a party life full of culture gain in importance. In the meantime, the MLPD has decided to participate in the state elections in NRW in May 2022. We propose to our alliance partners to run again together as Internationalist List / MLPD. In doing so, we will build on the progress and achievements of the 2021 tactical offensive and learn from weaknesses. For the next year we have also planned a lot. For example, we want to celebrate the 40th birthday of the MLPD in a fitting manner and use this occasion to anchor the achievements of our party building, which many young people have not experienced so consciously or have not made clear to themselves. And we will carry out a Willi Dickhut Year, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the death of this great revolutionary and leading thinker of our party, in order to spread his legacy even more decisively.

Thank you for your time!

I would also like to express my gratitude to all comrades, friends, and comrades-in-arms for the great deal of work they did with so much success in 2021.

Footnotes

1 [https://ondemand-mp3.dradio.de/file/dradio/2021/08/25/.ganz allein am strassenrand die guten alten wahlplakate dlf 20210825 1743 5b139962.mp3](https://ondemand-mp3.dradio.de/file/dradio/2021/08/25/.ganz%20allein%20am%20strassenrand%20die%20guten%20alten%20wahlplakate%20dlf%2020210825%201743%205b139962.mp3)

2 *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 25 September 2021

3 Von Clausewitz, *On War*, in three volumes, Volume 3, p. 32 (Book VII, Chapter XV (2)), London 1918

4 The UN Refugee Agency, "Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2020"; tagesschau.de, 13 September 2021

5 Evertiq.de 7 June 2021, heise.de 30 July 2021

6 Destatis press release, 13 October 2021

7 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 24 July 2021